

Dick's Vindication

IT was late in the month of October that a crowd of husky young men, dressed in football togs, poured forth from the side entrance of Dixon College. They were the Dixon football team, and were out for their final practice before the great game with Granby, a college some ten miles distant. As the game was to take place the following day, a large number of students gathered on the side lines to see the last try-out of the team.

Conspicuous among these was a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, gray eyed and dark complected, with a square determined chin. This was Dick Burton, last year the most popular student in the college, this year an outcast among his fellows.

He had played on the football team, but was accused of selling the signals to another college, a charge which he indignantly denied. His father was a wealthy merchant of Montreal, and it was chiefly through his influence that Dick was allowed to return to college.

The signals, which were the cause of all the trouble, had been, to all appearances, written in Burton's own handwriting. By this Dick knew that he had an enemy in college, but who it was he could not discover.

The whistle blew for the end of practice, and with a heavy heart, Burton turned towards the college. What chance was there to prove himself innocent when he had not a friend in the place? Small one indeed and he knew it, much to his sorrow.

The day of the great game with Granby College dawned cold and gray. A few murky clouds hung in the heavens, but with the appearance of the sun these quickly disappeared.

The game was to start at two o'clock, but long before that hour the stands were filled to overflowing. On one side of the field were the admirers of Dixon, and on the other the admirers of Granby. As each of the teams appeared they were greeted with a rousing cheer of encouragement by their supporters.

Promptly at two o'clock the referee appeared on the field. After a short discussion the two teams lined up, Granby having chosen to play against the wind for the first half.

Dixon kicked off, but the ball was returned to centre field by the Granby full back. Then followed some clever kicking and passing by both teams which finally resulted in a scrum being formed on Dixon's twenty-five yard line. How it was that the Granby quarter got the ball out and snapped it over to Henderson, nobody but himself could tell. The moment Henderson, the fastest runner on the Granby team, received the ball he was away like a flash down the field. Three of the Dixon team made noble efforts to down him but he dodged them skillfully. All that was now between him and the goal line was the Dixon full. With head down Henderson made straight at him. The full back tried to get him low, but was too late, and when he scrambled to his feet he saw the ball lying between the Dixon goal posts. The visitors had made the first score of the game.

After an unsuccessful attempt to convert, play was resumed, but presently the whistle blew for half time.

All through the first half, Dick was pacing up and down the side line. Oh, how he longed to be among that struggling mass of players! If they would only give him a chance he would soon show them whether he was loyal to his college or not. These thoughts were flashing through Dick's brain when the referee's whistle shrilled forth,—the second half of the game was about to begin.

This time the Granby boys had the wind behind them and things look bad for the home team. Granby kicked off. The ball sailed into Dixon territory and was fumbled by Peters. The visitors followed the ball up, and, for a moment, Dixon was in danger of being scored on again. But suddenly a figure darted from out a bunch of players. It was Morgan, the half back, who was playing the position that Dick Burton had played the year previous. He had the ball tucked under his arm, and like a frightened deer he

sped towards Granby's goal line. Successfully he eluded each pair of arms that tried to drag him down. He was within fifteen yards of the visitors goal line when, casting a frightened glance over his shoulder, he saw the set, determined face of Henderson. That was enough. Drawing in a gasping breath, he put all his remaining strength into one desperate dash. But too late! A pair of iron rings suddenly fixed themselves about his ankles. He tried to throw out his arms in an attempt to save himself but in vain. His head struck the ground with a sickening thud, a blinding light flashed before his eyes, and then, unconsciousness. Quickly they bore him from the field and summoned a doctor, who ordered him to be taken to the hospital immediately.

Great excitement prevailed after the accident. "Who," wondered the spectators, "would Dixon put on in Morgan's place?" Their curiosity was, however, very soon satisfied. Who should come running out on the field but Dick Burton! Yes, it was really Dick who was going to take Morgan's place. Filled with joy he ran out among the players. Now he had his chance! Now he'd prove his loyalty to the college!

The game was resumed as quickly as possible. Dick played the game of his life and seemed to be everywhere on the field at once. His tackling and kicking were marvelous. But it was not these points that made Butron the hero of the day. Granby had been slowly working the ball towards Dixon's goal line and the Dixon team were vainly trying to override the resistless wave that bore down upon them. Someone fumbled the ball and Dick darted forward and snapped it up. Down the field he dashed, dodging and zigzagging as he went. Every person on the stand was on his feet, and with opened mouth and dilated eyes watched the wonderful run. Could he make it? From the stand it looked impossible, but to Dick Burton, with the pigskin under his arm, nothing seemed impossible. Now he was within ten yards of the line. Behind him, scarcely two yards distant, three of the Granby team were straining every nerve to overtake him. Gathering himself together, Henderson sprang straight at the

speeding figure and landed on his shoulders. Burton staggered under the heavy weight, but with Henderson still clinging to him, he flung himself bodily at the goal line. He landed on the ground with a shock that drove every ounce of breath from his body. But was he over? For an agonizing moment he thought he had failed. But when a hand clapped him on the back and a voice shouted "You've saved the day old boy," a flood of joy ran through his body. He had tied the score. Drawing what breath he could into his aching body, he rose slowly to his feet. There was but one minute of play. Should he try a kick? A brisk wind was blowing, but seeing it was his only chance of winning the game, he was not long deciding.

Getting one of the team to hold the ball, he put himself into position for the attempt. He ran forward, and the ball, impelled by his strong, young leg, shot into the air. For a moment it looked as if it would go wide of its mark, but, as Dick had anticipated, the wind caught it and carried it squarely between the posts.

How they cheered him! Everyone forgot about the stolen signals and he was carried from the field on the shoulders of the crowd.

But now let us see how poor Morgan fared. Propped up with pillows, he lay in a neat little bed in the Waterville Hospital. Around him sat a nurse and two college students. Slowly Morgan's eyes opened. He turned his bandaged head, and catching sight of the two students, whispered in a low voice, "Anley, come here." Fred Anley bent over him. "What do you want, Jim, old man?" he said softly. "Fred," said Morgan in a voice scarcely above a whisper, "tell the fellows that Burton is innocent. It was I who sold those signals." That was all he could say. The effort had been too much for him and he fainted.

It is a week later. Things are running smoothly again at Dixon. The excitement of the game has died away, but Dick Burton is now no longer the outcast of the college, but once again the jolly favorite of former days.

F. T.